

TOWN OF AMHERST APPOINTED COMMITTEE CHARGE SUMMARY

250th Anniversary Celebration Committee – appointed by Select Board

This 21-member committee is charged with preparing and recommending to the Select Board a program of celebrations to commemorate Amherst's 250th anniversary in 2009, and to implement recommendations approved by the Select Board.

Amherst Cultural Council – appointed by Select Board

Allocates state Arts Lottery funds, but it is directed to support and nurture arts activities in the community by seeking private or other public funds and initiatives

■ Aquifer Protection Committee – appointed by Town Manager

Works with town staff, appropriate consulting and engineering firms, and other town boards and committees to ensure the protection of the Town of Amherst's aquifer.

Board of Assessors – appointed by Town Manager

The board has responsibility for levying the property taxes necessary to meet Town Meeting appropriations. Taxes are to be allocated equitably on the basis of the property valuation of each tax payer.

***■ Board of Health – appointed by Town Manager**

Responsible for enforcing the state sanitary code and other laws through regulations, permits, and inspections. State laws cover water quality, solid waste disposal, sewage disposal, food handling, housing and swimming pools. The town has specific responsibilities under state law for the control of certain diseases, and the board makes policies and regulations designed to insure compliance with town responsibilities. The board is also responsible for programs established by town by-laws and by the board itself. The board reviews subdivision applications coming before the Planning Board and special permit applications coming before the Zoning Board of Appeals, as well as working with the department of Public Works on aquifer protection and recycling.

Cable Advisory Committee – appointed by Town Manager

Monitors all aspects of the Amherst Cable Television system, recommends any correctional action that may be necessary and monitors compliance with all appropriate sections of the license agreement dated July 1, 1996. Under the direction of the Town Manager, and with his approval, the committee shall develop proposals for cable negotiations and act as the negotiating committee for franchise renewals. All proposals and tentative agreements, after the approval of the Town manager, will be presented in the form of a negotiated contract to the Select Board for its final approval.

Cherry Hill Advisory Committee – appointed by Town Manager

Advises the Leisure Services and Supplemental Education Department as to policy and fees, capital purchases, finances, staffing, and general management.

■ Community Preservation Act Committee (Bylaw) – appointed by Select Board

Studies the needs, possibilities and resources of the town regarding community preservation; makes recommendations to the Town Meeting annually for the acquisition, creation and preservation of open space, for the acquisition and preservation of historic resources, for the acquisition, creation and preservation of land for recreational use, for the creation, preservation and support of community housing

and for rehabilitation or restoration of such open space, historic resources, land for recreational use and community housing that is acquired or created as provided in the Community Preservation Act.

■ Comprehensive Planning Committee – appointed by Select Board

ATM April 30, 1997 (Article 23) voted to appropriate \$15,000 to undertake a Town-wide “visioning” process. The Comprehensive Planning Committee is responsible for developing a long-range policy plan to be used by the Town as a guide in determining its future. Whether used to limit or support the Town’s growth and development, the Comprehensive Plan will serve as a road map for pointing everyday decisions in the direction of agreed-upon goals. Also known as a Master Plan, it includes all aspects of daily life: housing transportation, schools, economic development, cultural resources, infrastructure, open space, government, recreation, farming, and more.

The Comprehensive Planning Committee is also responsible for coordinating the visioning process by which the Town will envision the future it wants, and then plans how to achieve it. It brings people together to create a shared image of what they want their community to become, the big picture of a desirable future. By providing numerous opportunities for all interested residents to participate, it lays the foundation for a broadbased Comprehensive Plan.

***■ Conservation Commission – appointed by Town Manager**

Promotes the preservation of open space through acquisition of land and development rights; makes policy related to the use and management of acquired conservation land. Other boards and commissions receive advice from the commission whenever their work is related to conservation issues.

MGL. ch. 40, sec. 8C established the authority of the town to set up a conservation commission to recommend the acquisition of open space and to engage in the promotion and development of natural resources, especially for the protection of water shed resources. MGL, ch. 131, sec. 40, and Amherst wetlands protection by-laws give the commission broad powers to regulate the use of wetlands.

Council on Aging (Bylaw) – appointed by Town Manager

The COA is primarily advisory. Its basic purposes are:

- a. To identify and advocate for the needs of the aging population.
- b. To educate and enlist the support and participation of all Amherst citizens to meet the needs of elders.
- c. To recommend and evaluate programs and services to meet these needs.
- d. To cooperate with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs and Highland Valley Elder Services (our area agency on aging), and to be cognizant of state and federal legislation and programs regarding elders.

Council on Youth – appointed by Town Manager

ATM, April 2003 – Article 10, voted to establish a Council on Youth to study questions concerning youth and recommend and support initiatives that address resolving those issues that contribute to putting youth at risk.

**Approval of Select Board required per Amherst Town Government Act signed into law December 29, 2001.*

■ March 13, 2006 SB voted to temporarily reinstate Special Municipal Employee Status only until September 11, 2006.

■ Design Review Board – appointed by Select Board

See section 3.2 of the Amherst Zoning By-Law, section 3.201 of which defines the board. Reviews all new structures and alterations to existing structures that affect exterior architectural appearance where the structure is on land zoned General Business or Limited Business (the latter abutting the General Business District. All changes of external architectural appearance occurring within 150 feet of the Town Common are also reviewed. All construction, alteration, demolition or removal of a structure or on a site by the Town of Amherst is also reviewed.

Disability Access Advisory Committee – appointed by Town Manager

Advises the Town on issues of physical, programmatic, and employment accessibility and makes recommendations concerning equal access where appropriate for people with disabilities.

Emergency Homeless Task Force – appointed by Select Board

Works on outreach and solutions for people who are in need of emergency shelter; to evaluate the extent of the homeless problem within the town; and offer further recommendations.

■ Economic Development and Industrial Corporation (*currently not active*) – appointed by Select Board

Assists in the planning and implementation of economic development projects and activities to benefit Amherst.

Electricity Deregulation Study Committee – appointed by Select Board

Studies the impact on the Town and its residential and business electricity users of the recent deregulation of electric utility rates and propose methods by which the Town might obtain environmentally responsible lower electric rates.

Farm Committee – appointed by Select Board

Encourages and assists the farming community in Amherst; advises the Select Board on farming as it relates to such issues as resource protection, economic development, and zoning; act as a liaison between the Select Board and the farming community; drawing on the Amherst Farmland Preservation Plan, the committee will serve as a forum for issues of particular concern to farmers.

Finance Committee – appointed by Moderator

Investigates all proposals in the articles of the warrant for any town meeting that shall in any way affect the finances of the Town and recommends at Town Meeting a course of action on such articles.

■ Fire Station Committee – appointed by Town Manager

Utilizing the National standards for emergency medical services and fire responses, determines if Amherst needs two or three fire stations to meet these objectives, and reports on possible locations of a (or several) new stations(s).

Government Affairs Committee (*currently not active*) – appointed by Select Board

Tracks state and federal legislation and regulations of concern to and impact on the Town of Amherst.; recommends Town policy on legislative affairs, and acts in accord with Town policy, as authorized by Town Meeting, the Select Board or the Town Manager.

***Historical Commission – appointed by Town Manager**

Identifies the Town's historic assets through extensive inventories and for developing programs of preservation; initiates recommendations for listing specific sites and areas in the National Register of Historic Places; acts as an advocate for the protection of historic and architecturally significant properties.

■ Housing Partnership/Fair Housing Committee – appointed by Select Board

The committee's tasks include the following:

- 1) to review possible imbalances in the geographical patterns of residences occupied by persons who are members of minority racial groups,
- 2) to review a Fair Housing Plan and Program and to recommend action on same periodically to the Select Board,
- 3) to supervise the publication and updating of "A Guide to Understanding Your Rights and Responsibilities as a Landlord or Tenant,
- 4) To review residential development projects and to submit recommendations to appropriate town boards and committees,
- 5) to solicit private sector involvement to increase opportunities for affordability, within the context of growth management measures,
- 6) to maintain public and media relations on housing issues including the preparation of a "developer's packet," and
- 7) to investigate the formation of a non-profit development agency.

Human Rights Commission (Bylaw) – appointed by Select Board

The Human Rights Commission is responsible for coordinate the human rights of all the citizens and employees of the Town of Amherst. To advocate for fair and equal employment practices, civil rights, and non-discriminatory treatment of all individuals. To coordinate educational activities to promote diversity, multiculturalism and inclusiveness of all Amherst, and to investigate complaints.

The charge of the DAAC is to act as an advisory, to actively promote programs and activities for people with disabilities. To work to ensure equal opportunity and access in compliance with local and state ADA Regulations.

Kanegasaki Sister City Committee – appointed by Select Board

Promotes friendship and on-going relations with Kanegasaki, Japan through various special events and ongoing contacts between residents or government bodies of the two communities.

La Paz Centro, Nicaragua Sister City Committee – appointed by Select Board

Serves as a link between the towns of Amherst, Massachusetts, USA and La Paz Centro, Nicaragua to serve the mutual benefit of residents of both communities by forging contacts between appropriate opposite residents in the two communities.

■ Leisure Services and Supplemental Education (LSSE) – appointed by Town Manager

Assists the Amherst Town LSSE Department in providing recreational facilities and a variety of leisure and recreational programs and supplemental education classes.

Munson Memorial Building Trustees – appointed by Town Manager

The trustees oversee the general use of the Munson Memorial Library building and act as the community representative for the town with respect to the building. They schedule and collect fees for the non-library use of the building. Along with the Friends of the Munson Memorial Library, the trustees plant and tend the garden and take care of the shrubbery. (Lawn mowing and snow removal is done by the town.)

Parking Commission (*currently not active*) – appointed by Select Board

Recommends and assists with the implementation of policies on planning, operation, and management of the downtown on-street and off-street parking system. The Commission's actions may include, but are not limited to, parking studies and recommendations for related capital improvements.

Personnel Board – appointed by Select Board

Establishes personnel policies (with the approval of the Town Meeting) relating to job classifications, pay scales, sick leave policies, etc., except for the Town Manager and School Department personnel. The board does not review collective bargaining agreements for town employees by local custom. The board interprets the Personnel By-Law of the town, advises the Town Manager about policies and regulations, and recommends changes in overall classification levels and policies covered by the Personnel By-Law to Town Meeting. The board also acts as a board of appeals to hear grievances, except where collective bargaining agreements provide otherwise.

***■ Planning Board – appointed by Town Manager**

Responsible for numerous matters related to community planning, development, and land use. The board conducts studies on land use, including development, housing, transportation, economic development, and zoning. The Planning Board reviews and proposes amendments to the Zoning Bylaw, and is required to hold public hearings and report to Town Meeting on all proposed zoning changes. The board approves subdivisions and promulgates rules and regulations for subdivision construction. Under the Amherst Zoning Bylaw, the board approves site plan reviews for cluster developments as well as commercial, office, and other non-residential uses of land. It approves special permits for open space community developments and other selected uses. It makes recommendations to the Zoning Board of Appeals on special permits, variances, and appeals. The Planning Board advises the Select Board on the release of property taxed as forest, farm, or recreation land and on the granting of special tax status for qualifying developments. The board must approve proposed changes in all town ways designated by Town Meeting as scenic roads.

Police Stops Committee – appointed by Select Board

Carries out the requirements of Article 28 of the 2004 Annual Town Meeting, passed by that body on May 12, 2004. This committee will work with the Amherst Town Manager, Town Counsel and Police Chief to implement the use of a one-page, standardized self-reporting form for police stops and will create a process to record and professionally evaluate the information gathered.

Public Art Commission – appointed by Select Board

Fosters a greater community awareness of the interaction with public art, and through public art, promotes cultural diversity and an improved quality of life for Amherst's citizens.

■ Public Works Committee – appointed by Select Board

The purposes of the commission include the following:

- 1) to evaluate the town's road, sidewalk, drainage and traffic circulation and to recommend priorities for their maintenance, repair, extension and reconstruction, consistently with recommendations of other town committees and departments,
- 2) to conduct public hearings, after notifying abutters in writing, on the need for and the scope of major projects proposed by the town or requested by petitioners, without conflict with the scenic road authority given to the Planning Board,
- 3) To recommend the appointment of technical, advisory or citizen's committees for major projects (with a representative of the commission as a member), and
- 4) To report annually to the town on its activities and on the expenditure of funds allocated to the committee.

Public Transportation & Bicycle Committee – appointed by Select Board

Advises the Select Board and Town Meeting on policy concerning public transportation. Its explicit purposes include:

- 1) reviewing all proposals concerning public transportation safety,

- 2) advising the Select Board and the town's representative on the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority,
 - 3) reporting to Town Meeting on any article that concerns public transportation,
 - 4) conducting specific studies concerning public transportation.
- The committee also maintains a permanent sub-committee concerning bicycling.

Regional Refuse District Board of Supervisors (*Dormant*) – appointed by Select Board

Under the provisions of state law, Amherst Town Meeting (May, 1990) accepted an agreement to establish the Eastern Hampshire Refuse District. The agreement calls for a Board of Supervisors of nine members with three representatives from each of the three member towns of Amherst, Belchertown and Hadley. The Board of Supervisors exercises the authority of the district, including providing for source reduction, disposal of solid waste generated by member municipalities, and developing programs of community education on these issues.

Registrars of Voters

Responsible for carrying out the election laws of the state and administering state regulations that bear on elections. This involves most of the clerical work connected with maintaining voter registration lists and supervising and tabulating election results. The board also makes policy recommendations with regard to voter registration and petitions for special elections.

Solid Waste Committee

Charged with continuing to develop a comprehensive, long-term solid waste plan.

■ Town/Commercial Relations Committee – appointed by Select Board

Advises the Select Board on the needs and desires of the Amherst business community as it relates to town regulations and by-laws, especially those relating to economic development, planning and zoning, public safety, traffic and parking. It serves as a liaison with Amherst businesspersons to advise them of community interests with regard to commercial policies and practices. It will also provide a forum for the discussion of issues of interest to town government and the business community.

■ Zoning Board of Appeals – appointed by Select Board – appointed by Select Board

The board is a quasi-judicial board. It hears petitions for special permits and variances, requests for changes in conditions of special permits, appeals from decisions of the Building Commissioner, and approves site plans related to special permit applications.

Revised 03-23-2011

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